

# How Do I Follow a Healthy Diet?

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Healthy food habits can help you reduce three risk factors for heart attack and stroke — high blood cholesterol, high blood pressure and excess body weight.

Here are the basic food groups with the number of servings we recommend. Be sure to choose a variety of foods from each group.



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## Breads, cereals, pasta and starchy vegetables (6 or more servings per day)

- One serving equals 1 slice bread; 1/2 cup hot cereal, 1 cup flaked cereal; 1/2 cup cooked rice or pasta; or 1/4 to 1/2 cup starchy vegetables, like beans, corn or potatoes.
- Include whole-grain products like whole-wheat bread, whole-grain crackers and brown rice, as much as possible.
- Many crackers and snacks are now available in low-fat and low-salt varieties.

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## Vegetables and fruits (5 or more servings per day)

- One serving equals a medium-size piece of fruit, 3/4 cup fruit juice, or 1/2 to 1 cup cooked or raw vegetables.
- Fruits and vegetables are high in vitamins, minerals and fiber, low in fat, calories and sodium, and have no cholesterol!

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## Lean meat, poultry, fish and beans (no more than 6 cooked ounces per day)

- A 3 oz. portion is about the size of a deck of playing cards, 1/2 of a chicken breast or 3/4 cup of flaked fish.
- Enjoy at least 2 servings of baked or grilled fish each week.
- Trim fat from meats; remove skin from poultry.
- 1/2 cup of cooked beans, peas or lentils, equals a 1 oz. serving of meat, poultry or fish. A 1/2 cup of tofu or one egg equals 1 oz. of meat.

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## Fat-free and low-fat milk products (2 to 4 servings per day)

- One serving equals 1 cup milk or yogurt or 1 oz. cheese.
- Use only milk products with 0 to 1% fat. 2% milk is not low-fat.
- Have only fat-free or low-fat yogurt.
- Use dry-curd, fat-free or low-fat cottage cheese.
- Cheeses should have no more than 3 grams of fat per oz. and no more than 2 grams of saturated fat per oz.

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## Fats and oils (no more than 5 to 8 teaspoons or equivalent servings per day)

- One serving equals 1 tsp. vegetable oil or regular margarine, 2 tsp. diet margarine, 1 Tbsp. salad dressing, 2 tsp. regular mayonnaise or peanut butter.
- One serving equals 1 Tbsp. seeds or nuts, 1/8 medium-size avocado, 10 small or 5 large olives.

- Choose fats and oils with 2 grams or less saturated fat per tablespoon, such as liquid and tub margarines, and canola, corn, safflower, soy bean and olive oils.
- Be sure to count the fats used in store-bought foods, in cooking and on vegetables and breads.
- Read food labels carefully and try to avoid “hydrogenated” oils and fats.

## How can I cut down on saturated fat and calories?

- For your main dish, enjoy pasta, rice, beans and/or vegetables. Or mix these foods with small amounts of lean meat, skinless poultry or fish.
- Boil, broil, grill, bake, roast, poach, steam, sauté, stir-fry or microwave. Don't fry in oil.
- Trim fat from meat and poultry. Drain fat after browning. Chill soups and stews after cooking to remove hard fat from the top.

## How can I cut down on dietary cholesterol?

- Foods from animals (such as meat, poultry, egg yolks, butter, cheese and full-fat milk) are high in cholesterol. Eat less of them.
- Eggs and shellfish are high in cholesterol but low in saturated fat and total fat. Here are some tips about using eggs in your diet:
  - One large, whole egg has about 213 mg of cholesterol. This is about 71% of the daily limit (less than 300 mg). Extra-large and jumbo eggs have even more.
  - Use two egg whites, or one egg white plus 2 teaspoons of unsaturated oil, in place of one whole egg in cooking. You can also use egg substitutes.
  - If you eat a whole egg, try to avoid or limit other sources of cholesterol on that day.

## How can I learn more?

1. Talk to your doctor, nurse or other health-care professionals. If you have heart disease or have had a stroke, members of your family also may be at higher risk. It's very important for them to make changes now to lower their risk.
  2. Call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721), or visit [americanheart.org](http://americanheart.org) to learn more about heart disease.
  3. For information on stroke, call 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653) or visit us online at [StrokeAssociation.org](http://StrokeAssociation.org).
- We have many other fact sheets and educational booklets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one.
- Knowledge is power, so *Learn and Live!*

## Do you have questions or comments for your doctor or nurse?

- Take a few minutes to write your own questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider. For example:

What about desserts?

What's a good, healthful cookbook?